



FRANCE: U.S. AND FRENCH MUSLIMS EXCHANGE

Three Muslim Americans -- Islam for Dummies author Sohaib Nazeer Sultan, Brookings Institute Intern Aalaa Abuzaakouk, and Public Advocacy Program Coordinator Zeenat Rahman -- explored Islam in the U.S. and integration issues with 100 French Muslims in Lyon, France.

The speakers, who were brought to France as part of the U.S. State Department's Citizen Dialogue Program, participated in an inter-faith conference on the significance of pilgrimages with Sunni, Shia, and Catholic panel speakers at Lyon's largest mosque. They then separately met with about 30 of the Mosque's volunteers to discuss their experiences as Muslims in the U.S. The Citizen's Dialogue tour finished with a visit to France's fifth (and largest) Islamic High School, Lyceé El Kindi.



U.S. Consul Harry Sullivan with Citizen Dialogue participants and volunteers at the Grand Mosque, December 2007. [Alain Beullard, APP Staff]

SWEDEN: CALIFORNIA-SWEDEN GROUP FOCUSES ON RENEWABLE FUELS



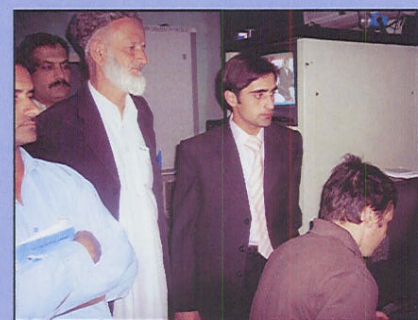
James Boyd (right) speaks with the Archbishop of Sweden, Anders Wejryd, November 29-30, 2007. [Robert Hilton, U.S. Embassy Stockholm]

In an important visit to Sweden, James Boyd, Vice Chairman of the California Energy Commission, urged the establishment of a California-Sweden working group to expand use of renewable fuels. Mr. Boyd, who came to Stockholm at the invitation of the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm and the Ministry of Enterprise, also met with Minister of Foreign Trade Eva Björling, two State Secretaries to the Minister of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, and the Prime Minister. Meetings were also held with energy experts from local government, industry representatives, and a newspaper journalist. Mr. Boyd said that California has become a

global leader in reducing greenhouse gases because of specific policy and technology steps taken by the state government and that they are interested in learning from Sweden's public awareness efforts.

SLOVAKIA: EMBASSY GRANT PROMOTES DEMOCRACY-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

With a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia, the Slovak non-governmental organization (NGO) "On Your Side," solidified the establishment of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. The NGO sent a group of Slovak journalists to share their hard-earned reporting skills with Afghan journalists. Through their efforts 12 journalists, including anchors, reporters, cameramen, and editors were trained for a total of eleven days. In 2005 and 2006 the first round of this training took place to impart professional skills including training in state-of-the art digital video production and post-production technology in order to strengthen regional media development. As part of the project, a group of six Afghan journalists and cameramen came to Slovakia for a two-week long course aimed at sharing ideas in freedom of information, balanced and fair news production, and the relationship between local media and local government.



Slovak regional TV reporters and Afghan counterparts look over coverage in Kunduz, as part of training module, December 2007. [Miroslav Majer, "On Your Side"]

KOSOVO: OPENING OF ROMA EDUCATION CENTER CHEERED BY YOUNGSTERS

The U.S. Office in Pristina (USOP) helped inaugurate the opening of the new Roma Education Center in the mixed-ethnic area of Gracanica. The U.S. Office celebrated the opening of the learning center along with the Municipality, the Kosovo Roma community, Finnish KFOR (who funded the building itself) and Irish KFOR (who protects the area) as the three- and four-year olds cheered the opening and sang for the visitors. A grant of \$13,500 has provided six computers, education materials for an enhanced computer literacy program, and maintenance and salaries for two teachers for a year. USOP demonstrated its commitment to aligning its activities with the goal of outreach to all ethnic and religious groups in Kosovo.



USOP Public Affairs Officer Posner-Mullen (right) with Roma students at the Education Center in Gracanica, December 4, 2007. [Burim Pllana, USOP]

HUNGARY: CAMPAIGNING AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



(L-R) Mr. Jim Barker, Ambassador Foley, and Ms. Andrea Bottner at the conference, November 29, 2007. [Norbert Vitez, U.S. Embassy Budapest]

Director of the Office of International Women's Issues at the U.S. State Department Andrea Bottner visited Hungary to assist U.S. Ambassador to Hungary April Foley's efforts to mark the campaign of "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence." Ms. Bottner was accompanied by the Training Director from the San Diego Family Justice Center Jim Barker. During their three-day visit, they exchanged information and shared best practices with various Hungarian officials dealing with domestic violence including the representatives of the police, the prosecutor's office, the courts, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and different civil organizations. The U.S. Embassy in Budapest also organized a conference at the International Law Enforcement Academy to discuss domestic violence where the Ambassador spoke on the importance of cooperation between the various parties to change the social attitude towards domestic violence and to enhance the effectiveness of the legislative and judicial actions against this problem.

TURKEY: TURKISH YOUTH MAKE FRIENDS IN NEW YORK CITY THROUGH MUSIC

The Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Foundation connected 500 high school students in Istanbul with 400 students in New York City for an exciting simultaneous concert broadcast. The concert, supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the *Citi Foundation* was facilitated by the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul and Bogazici University. Turkish youth danced to the jazz sounds of John Hollenbeck and the Claudia Quintet, while Turkish clarinet star Hüsnü Şenlendirici and the New York Gypsy All-Stars brought the house down in New York.



Right: Audience cheers to Husnu Senlendirici and the New York Gypsy All-Stars, December 5, 2007. [Ates Oner, U.S. Consulate Istanbul]

U.K.: RESCUERS OF WWII ART TREASURES HONORED

U.S. Ambassador to United Kingdom Robert Tuttle honored the last known living British person who helped to rescue and return looted art treasures at the end of World War II, Mrs. Anne Olivier Bell, aged 91. Mrs. Bell worked for the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives program (MFAA), set up by the U.S. Government and its Allies in 1943. Ambassador Tuttle presented Mrs. Bell with an American flag which flew over the Capitol Building on the anniversary of D-Day this year, and a framed copy of Resolution 223, which honors the work of the MFAA. Also present at the ceremony were author Robert Edsel, whose book 'Rescuing Da Vinci' did much to bring the world of the MFAA to public recognition, and members of Mrs. Bell's family.



Ambassador Tuttle (R) and author Robert Edsel (L) honor Mrs. Anne Olivier Bell at Winfield House, December 3, 2007. [Sue Wedlake, U.S. Embassy London]

AZERBAIJAN: YO YO MA AND THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE ENTHRALL HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Famous Azerbaijani mugham singer Alim Gasimov and other Azerbaijani musicians accompanied world-renowned cellist Yo Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble at Harvard University for two performances of the new chamber version of "Leyla and Majnun" (1908), the seminal Azerbaijani opera by composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov. Alim Gasimov's multi-year collaboration with Cultural Ambassador Yo Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble was made possible in part by a Culture Connect grant from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Dr. Aida Huseynova, an ethnomusicologist and Azerbaijani Fulbright scholar, introduced the group and discussed the role of mugham in Azerbaijani music and the cultural significance of the opera in a lecture and in pre-concert talks before each performance. Yo-Yo Ma, Alim Gasimov, and all musicians of the Silk Road Ensemble shared their vision of the new project during Q and A sessions following each performance. The cultural program also included an exhibition of images about "Leyla and Majnun" at the Harvard University Sackler Art Museum and discussions with scholars and musicians of the Silk Road Ensemble.



Musicians perform for Harvard University, November 29-30, 2007. [With permission from Isabelle Hunter, Silk Road Project]



Children have fun with soccer-playing robot puppies at the Belgrade Science Festival, December 1-2, 2007. [Jelena Putre, U.S. Embassy Belgrade]

SERBIA: SOCCER-PLAYING ROBOT PUPPIES DELIGHT ALL!

Dr. Sheila Tejada, Professor at Brooklyn College in New York, visited Belgrade on a U.S. Speaker program and gave a presentation on robotics and artificial intelligence at the First Science Festival in Belgrade. Dr. Tejada demonstrated a pair of robot puppies that has been created and developed for RoboCup international robotic soccer competitions which can also be employed for research, in education, in urban rescue efforts, and as medical help in private homes. Her presentation attracted an audience of more than 100 children and youth attending the Science Festival. In addition, Dr. Tejada delivered a lecture at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Belgrade, for a group of 50 students and professors.

ICELAND: STUDENT OUTREACH CHANGES PERCEPTIONS

The U.S. Embassy in Reykjavik has conducted several university student outreach programs over the last few months to discuss upcoming U.S. elections, explain U.S. foreign policy, and educate students on what diplomats do and how the U.S. Embassy works. Over 95 students from the University of Iceland and Bifrost University have visited the U.S. Embassy and engaged in conversations with embassy staff. Students have responded favorably to the “open friendly discussions” and requested more such encounters. One student wrote, “I was really impressed with being able to actually go into this ‘fortress’ that I have grown up only watching from the outside. I very much liked the Q and A. I found it especially compelling that they actually invited us to talk about the subject of Iraq, thinking that it was maybe an old discussion they would be tired of going into; it made the embassy seem more ‘human’ to know that they really care about our opinion.”



University students in Reykjavik visit the U.S. Embassy to learn more about U.S. foreign policy, November 30, 2007. [Kristinn Gilsdorf, U.S. Embassy Reykjavik]



Ambassador English and Dean Dizdar of the University of Sarajevo prepare to officially open the University's new American Studies Resource Room, November 21, 2007. [Adnan Bujak, U.S. Embassy Sarajevo]

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: FIRST AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN SARAJEVO

The U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo funded new computers and equipment in support of the first American Studies program in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The program is a result of a three-year grant from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs for a “university linkage” between Smith College and the University of Sarajevo. The program was inaugurated by U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia Charles English who addressed roughly 300 students and faculty members of the University with a speech commemorating the 12th anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords.

RUSSIA : FLORIDA'S EXPERTS DISCUSS FOSTER CARE

The U.S. Consulate in Yekaterinburg held a digital video conference explaining Florida's foster care system to interested Sverdlovsk officials and NGOs working to create child-welfare legislation and institutions. U.S. participants included Jim Kallinger, Director of the Office of Adoption and Child Protection within the Executive Office of the Florida Governor, Alan Abramowitz, Florida's Department of Children and Families Circuit Administrator, Glen Casel, President/CEO of Community Based Care of Seminole County, and Gordon Johnson, President of Neighbor To Family, Inc. The experts spoke about Florida's child welfare system in general, about legislation connected with children in the state custody, and control over foster families. The 15 participants from Sverdlovsk included a deputy of the Sverdlovsk Regional Duma, Dmitry Vershinin, representatives of the regional departments of human services, assistants of the Sverdlovsk Regional Ombudsman, journalists, and leaders of not-for-profit organizations working with children. The participants were impressed by the Florida state efforts to inform the citizens about its foster care system, and by the remarkable number of volunteers directly involved in child welfare programs.



Russian Duma member Dmitry Vershinin and audience during the digital video conference with Florida, December 2007. [Slavyana Sagakyan, U.S. Consulate Yekaterinburg]

NORWAY: THIRTY LUCKY NORWEGIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS MEET NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES

Thirty high school students attended a reception at U.S. Ambassador to Norway Benson K. Whitney's residence in honor of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, Vice President Al Gore, and IPCC Chairman Dr. Rajendra Pachauri. All the students had been selected by their respective schools based on their excellence and their participation in environmental organizations or the Model UN. The Nobel laureates spoke passionately to the students about joint environmental responsibilities, and particularly about the opportunity young people have to step up and join forces in the fight to save the planet. Additionally, the Ambassador and the U.S. Embassy in Oslo staff talked to the students about education and the prospects of studying in the U.S. A group photo was sent later to each participant and to their schools.



Norwegian high school students with Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, December 11, 2007. [Marit Andersen, U.S. Embassy Oslo]

ALBANIA: UNESCO-RECOGNIZED "MASTERPIECE" PUBLISHED



U.S. Ambassador to Albania John L. Withers II speaks with author Vasil Tole (left) and scholar Fatmir Hysi (right), December 12, 2007. [Robert Manga, U.S. Embassy Tirana]

The Encyclopedia of Albanian Folk Iso-Polyphonic music was published thanks to a \$24,000 grant (2006) from the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. The first comprehensive reference source of its kind, the Encyclopedia comes in both English and Albanian and includes supplementary recordings and a multimedia website featuring music samples, scores, photos, and information on musicians, specialists, and iso-polyphonic vocabulary. Albanian scholars, musicians, ethnomusicologists, Members of Parliament, and ministry officials attended the ceremony. Fifteen copies were donated to the High School of Music "Jordan Misja" in Tirana. This unique musical form received the status of a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Mankind two years ago.

MOLDOVA: CLOTHES, TOYS, AND SUPPLIES DONATED TO BOARDING SCHOOL

Over 320 children received clothes and gifts at a festive Christmas ceremony at the Orhei Boarding School for Children with Mental and Physical Disabilities on December 20, 2007. The effort to collect money and donations was coordinated by the Bilateral Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau and included contributions from U.S. Embassy staff and the American community in Moldova, as well as donations from the Goldsboro North Carolina Rotary Club and the New Beginnings Sunday School Class of White Plains United Methodist Church in Raleigh, NC. The donation, worth approximately 4,000 dollars, includes electric razors, disposable diapers, toys, and donated clothes. U.S. Ambassador to Moldova Michael Kirby visited the school and helped donate the gifts.



Right: Ambassador Kirby meets the young recipients of U.S. gifts at the Orhei Boarding School for Children with Mental and Physical Disabilities, December 20, 2007. [Lucia Aprodu, U.S. Embassy Chisinau]

KOSOVO: ULTIMATE FRISBEE FORGES TIES ACROSS ETHNIC LINES

Over 30 Kosovar Albanian and Serb ACCESS students gathered for a day of ultimate frisbee in Pristina. Now an annual event, American volunteers for a second year in a row helped coach students in an exciting game full of team spirit and sportsmanship. The ACCESS program in Kosovo continues to expose students from multi-ethnic backgrounds to experiences and opportunities which promote cooperation and mutual understanding. ACCESS English classes bring students from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds together to communicate in a neutral language: English. The classes also highlight American culture and values.



English Language Fellow Molly Staeheli (center with orange Frisbee) and her multi-ethnic English students after a day of Ultimate Frisbee, November 24, 2007. [Ardita Hima, Kosovo Education Center]



Ambassador Wagner and three prize winners, December 2007. [Patricia Reckel, U.S. Embassy Luxembourg]

LUXEMBOURG: ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS HONORED

U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg Ann Wagner hosted a reception at her residence honoring the winners of the Best of Both Cultures Essay Contest. The contest, which was launched in September 2006, was aimed at students attending their last two years of secondary school in Luxembourg. The essays were judged by four judges, two from each country. Three "Grand Prize Winners" each received a voucher for a trip to a destination of their choice, and five additional prize winners received gift vouchers for a total amount of over \$2,000. Ten honorable mention prizes were also awarded. The reception was an opportunity not only to meet the student finalists from eight different schools but also to reach out to their parents, the headmasters and English teachers from their high schools, and the panel of judges.

MACEDONIA: FILM FESTIVAL DAZZLES MOVIE LOVERS

A film festival launched by the U.S. Embassy in Skopje and Macedonian Cinematheque played to overflowing crowds in three cities in Macedonia. The festival, "American Literature on Film," showcased films rarely seen by Macedonian audiences and included subtitles in Macedonian and Albanian. U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia Gillian Milovanovic spoke at the opening, which featured *The Glass Menagerie*, along with a poster show of classic American films and a display of classic American literature. Professor John Dean flew in from Paris to hold classes and workshops on American film for Macedonian high school and university students in Skopje and Tetovo.

Right: Poster of film festival, December 2007.



ROMANIA: "AMERICAN ROADSIDE ARCHITECTURE" EXHIBIT IS A HIT



Young art lovers admire the photos of John Margolies, December 2007. [©Prolmage]

The opening of a photo exhibit entitled "American Roadside Architecture" at the Palace of Culture in Iasi proved to be a great success. The exhibit opening attracted a large crowd of local officials, art lovers, scholars, art critics, visual artists, Fulbrighters, Peace Corp volunteers, and university, and high school students. The opening was enlivened by recorded music of American road songs and the screening of a documentary entitled "Unusual Buildings." The director of the museum, the prefect of Iasi, and the deputy mayor all expressed their enthusiasm for this event and for the U.S. model of road infrastructure development.

NORWAY: U.S. ELECTION EXPERT EDUCATES

Political consultant and expert on U.S. election campaigns, Gary Nordlinger, kicked off the U.S. Embassy in Oslo's election speaker series by speaking on the nuts and bolts of the 2008 presidential election at well-attended seminars in Bergen, Trondheim, and Oslo. In Bergen and Trondheim, seminars were organized with 60 political science and USA Studies undergraduate and graduate students, as well as researchers and professors in attendance. In Oslo, the U.S. Embassy welcomed an audience of 120 journalists, students, researchers, government officials, and diplomats to the U.S. Embassy Café. A lively Q and A session with Nordlinger increased audience understanding of U.S. election complexities.



Attendee Alf Thomas Tønnesen and Mr. Nordlinger hold a Republican elephant with a Democrat t-shirt, November 19-22, 2007. [Kjersti S. Ofstad, U.S. Embassy Oslo]

SERBIA: JOURNALISTS LEARN ABOUT CULTURAL REPORTING



Professor William Silcock with journalists who participated in the U.S. Embassy's "Cultural Reporting" seminar, November 19-23, 2007. [With permission from Branislav Djordjevic]

Award-winning broadcast journalist and TV news documentary producer, Assistant Professor William Silcock, conducted a workshop on "Cultural Reporting" in Belgrade as part of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade's in-country media training program. In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, U.S. Embassy Belgrade selected 20 young and mid-level editors/journalists from Belgrade and other five cities throughout Serbia to participate in the training. Those included were wire services FONET, BETA and TANJUG; TV stations RTS, B92, Studio B, TV Kosava; and many more.

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